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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU: WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR REPORT

REF: 2008 SECSTATE 127448

¶1. SUMMARY: There are no specific laws that protect children from exploitation in the workplace, and child labor occurred during the reporting period. A lack of resources and political instability hampered the GOGB's response to the problem. END SUMMARY

¶2. There are no specific laws that protect children from exploitation in the workplace, and child labor occurred. The legal minimum age is 14 years for general factory labor and 18 years for heavy or dangerous labor, including labor in mines and the armed forces. The small formal sector generally adhered to these minimum age requirements; however, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor did not enforce these requirements in other sectors.

¶3. The Institute of Women and Children and the ministries of labor and justice are responsible for protecting children from labor exploitation; however, there was no effective enforcement due to insufficient protective statutes, and capacity constraints in the police and judiciary.

¶4. Most child labor occurred in the informal sector. The incidence of children working in street trading in cities increased during the year. In rural communities, children did domestic and field work without pay to support families or because of a lack of educational opportunities. Some children were partially or completely withdrawn from school to work in the fields during the annual cashew harvest. The government had not taken action to combat such practices by year's end. Children were trafficked for purposes of labor exploitation, working as domestic servants, shining shoes in urban areas, and selling street food such as bananas and peanuts.

¶5. Throughout the reporting period, the GOGB made little progress in combating child labor. Following the dissolution of the government and National Assembly in early August, 2008, officials were focused on the November 16 legislative elections, and distracted by attempted coups in August and November. A new government was installed in January 2009 and pledged to unveil its legislative and budgetary program by the end of February.

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